

**2005 WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE ON AGING SOLUTIONS FORUM**  
**Joint Conference of the American Society on Aging and The National Council on**  
**the Aging**  
**Philadelphia, PA**  
**Saturday, March 12, 2005**

**TESTIMONY OF DONNA M. BUTTS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,**  
**GENERATIONS UNITED**

Good morning, my name is Donna Butts, and I am the Executive Director of Generations United. I would like to thank the 2005 White House Conference on Aging Policy Committee for this opportunity to provide testimony.

Generations United is the only national membership organization focused solely on promoting intergenerational strategies, programs, and public policies. We represent more than 100 national, state, and local organizations representing more than 70 million Americans. GU is the only national organization advocating for the mutual well being of children, youth, and older adults. We serve as a resource for educating policymakers and the public about the economic, social, and personal imperatives of intergenerational cooperation. Thank you for designating Generations United's biennial international conference, to be held this coming September 13 through 17, as an official WHCOA event. At the conference, we will be focusing our discussions on identifying intergenerational public policy recommendations.

Today I would like to offer three specific recommendations:

**One, Encourage the development of intergenerational shared sites and shared use of resources.**

The majority of baby boomers, 73%, do not intend to move from their age-integrated communities to age-segregated sun cities. Yet policies focused on protecting specific age groups actually conflict and keep generations apart. Intergenerational shared sites-such as co-located child and adult day care centers, senior centers in schools, before and after school programs in assisted living facilities-are discouraged when program and facility developers try to reconcile incongruent requirements. These can include differing staff to participant ratios, square footage requirements, numbers of meals to be served, zoning restrictions, and needed accreditations and certifications. We recommend conducting a review of existing policies that serve as barriers and create more options for intergenerational shared sites throughout the country. Intergenerational shared sites are cost effective and can help meet our country's growing dependent care needs.

**Two, Expand existing senior volunteer programs.**

Many older adults are engaged in intergenerational programs. Yet many existing volunteer venues are outdated. The Corporation for National Service's Senior Corps programs provide important services but are governed by restrictions that were established more than thirty years ago. Times have changed and the programs need to be expanded to reflect this. Age and income limitations that exclude large numbers of able and willing older adults need to be changed. There need to be more opportunities for demonstrations programs to test innovative programs that engage the diverse interest of baby boomers such as the Traveling Grannies/Grandpas Program in Michigan that pairs

retired older adults with new teen mothers and/or fathers for in home visits, mentoring and coaching. During its more than ten year existence the program has had a tremendous impact on increasing school completion and decreasing second pregnancies. Other intergenerational programs address important environmental concerns and substance abuse prevention while others encourage service learning and civic engagement. All are important and deserve to be included in expanded, existing volunteer structures.

**Three, Support grandparents raising grandchildren by establishing a national subsidized guardianship program.**

More than 2.4 million grandparents have primary responsibility for raising grandchildren residing in their homes. These grandparents are more than 60% likely to live in poverty than are their peers. The median age of a grandparent raising a grandchild is 57. While many in their age cohort are focused on saving and preparing for retirement, these grandparents are saving for college or spending down established savings to provide food, shelter and clothing for the young ones in their care. If we do not provide support for them now, we face supporting a new cadre of poor elderly. A national Subsidized Guardianship Program can help prevent this by allowing states the flexibility to use Title IV-E funds to support subsidized guardianships that move grandparent-headed families from temporary to permanent placements. State waiver programs have demonstrated the cost effectiveness of the use of such funds and the positive impact this has on families.

In conclusion, we at Generations United believe resources are better used when they connect the generations rather than separate them. Intergenerational approaches are not just nice, but very necessary as we look forward to changing demographics and increased opportunities to engage people across the lifespan.

Thank you for this opportunity and on behalf of Generations United, I look forward to working with you for a successful and productive White House Conference on Aging.

For further information on Generations United, visit [www.gu.org](http://www.gu.org).

Conclusions

We at Generations United believe that resources are better used when they unite the generations rather than separate them.

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Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. We at Generations United look forward to